

B.C.'s legislature could be lost like Atlantis, say environmentalists

The Canadian Press(CP)

December 7, 2006 Thursday

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Section: WESTERN GENERAL NEWS

Length: 381 words

Byline: CP

Body

VANCOUVER (CP) _ B.C.'s legislature could be a lost memory like Atlantis, swamped by oceans that rise due to the greenhouse effect, say environmentalists.

The B.C. chapter of the Sierra Club of Canada issued the watery warning, seizing on a catchy metaphor to call for stronger provincial action on global warming.

The forecast over a generation is based on a calculated sea level rise of six- to 25 metres in the B.C. capital regional district.

The Sierra Club wants the province to legislate mandatory reductions in B.C.'s greenhouse gas emissions.

Based on their calculations, the 25-metre scenario would see 74 per cent of Victoria submerged, affecting such sites as the legislature and cruise ship terminal.

"At six metres, they would have the waves kind of lapping at the front steps,' says Lisa Matthaus, campaigns director for the Sierra Club.

"People would definitely have to wade to work. At 25 metres, it's pretty much gone."

A total 100 per cent of Sidney, 78 per cent of Esquimalt and 65 per cent of Oak Bay would also be submerged.

"The way we understand the science the six- metre rise, or something close to it, is something that might be seen in our grandchildren's time, towards the end of this century," she says.

"This isn't 200, 300 or 400 years out. It is within the lifetime, potentially, of people being born today."

Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe found it all quite shocking.

"If it is, indeed, true that within the next 100 years or so, there may be a six to 25-metre rise in sea level, the devastation it will cause on our properties will be huge," he said.

He called for action by all levels of government.

Environment Minister Barry Penner says the Sierra Club is betting on the "worst-case scenarios" to make its point.

"The B.C government does take climate-change threats seriously," Penner says.

He notes that the Liberals have taken various steps, including the approval of green-energy projects and the renewal of tax credits for the purchase of hybrid cars.

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The six-metre suggestion is based on projections in the March 2006 issue of the journal Science.

The 25-metre scenario is based on information from the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

The calculations are based on projected increases in the Earth's temperature, says Matthaus.

(Vancouver Province)

Load-Date: December 7, 2006

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